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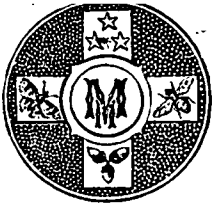
LIFE'S WORK AND GOD'S DISCIPLINE.



LIFE'S WORK AND GOD'S DISCIPLINE:

THREE SERMONS

Preached before the University of Cambridge

IN APRIL AND MAY, 1865.

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BY

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VICAR OF DONCASTER.

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It may be right to mention that two or three paragraphs have been inserted in the first of these Sermons since its delivery.

I.

THE WORK BURNED, AND THE WORKMAN SAVED.

I.

THE WORK BURNED AND THE WORKMAN SAVED.

1 Cor. iii. 15.

If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.

The work burned, and the person saved—the life gone for nothing, and yet the soul rescued as through fire—this is a combination as startling as it is unique. The text, if this be its meaning, certainly stands alone in Holy Scripture.

In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established. Such is the rule of justice, when life hangs in the balance: and

God Himself has been pleased commonly to adhere to it, when He speaks for the guidance of lives and the salvation of souls.

A peculiar interest therefore attaches itself to those exceptional cases in which the whole weight of Divine authority rests upon a single, isolated, solitary utterance; when we can turn to no parallel, but must accept as an inspired saying a testimony which comes to us unsupported and alone.

Of this kind is St Paul's declaration concerning the remedial purpose (in certain cases) not only of bodily inflictions in this life, but even—which is a wholly different matter—of sicknesses unto death. Of this kind, his disclosure of the change equivalent to Resurrection which shall pass (at Christ's Advent) upon the generation of the living. Of this kind—so far at least as the New Testament is concerned—his distinct prediction of the final salvation of the national Israel. Of this kind, St Peter's

mysterious history of the preaching of the Lord Jesus Christ, *quickened in the Spirit,* to the (once disobedient) spirits in prison. Of this kind, that revelation, on which I desire to say a few practical words this day, of a possible conflagration of the life's work, accompanied by a salvation, as through fire, of the soul and person of the workman.

The Church of Corinth, by a startling anticipation of the follies and sins of later generations, had split itself up into religious parties. Taking as their watchwords the names of blessed Apostles and holy teachers by whom God had taught and wrought amongst them; taking in some cases the yet holier name of Christ Himself, as though to assert for one faction a still purer doctrine or a still more immediate inspiration; they had rent to pieces the seamless coat, and cut into minutest sections the indivisible body.

Such is the scene upon which this remark-

able letter presents itself. It must have come into the Corinthian assembly almost with the surprise and shock of an apparition: so wonderfully life-like is the Apostle's writing; so individual, so human, so impassioned, so vocal.

Carnal men, he says to them, *carnal, not spiritual! with all your vaunted gifts, so infantine in graces! envying and striving, jarring and jangling—setting up as heads of parties men who all came to you from one Lord, and all laboured to bring you to one end—what shall I say to you? Shall I remind you that man is nothing, that God is all? Shall I remind you that the work of Christ is one work, and that no labourer in that work shall be the loser by another's gain? that, as we are God's co-workers, so ye are God's husbandry and God's building? Rather let me remind you of the solemn responsibilities which lie upon the workmen, if so be I may win you from this silly idolatry of the man (be he who he may) to feel for him and to pity*

him, to help him with your sympathy and to help him with your prayers. Remember the anxiety of the work—forecast the revelations of the Day—and assuredly you will have no heart to tempt us, whether it be I or they, into a rivalry as senseless as it is wicked.

The work of the ministry is a work of building. There is a vast spiritual Temple rising upon earth, to be the everlasting habitation of God through the Spirit. The foundation-stone of that temple is laid once for all: it is Christ Himself. No man, I suppose, will think to disturb that—to displace Him. But the work is not done because the foundation is laid. The walls must gradually rise, tier above tier —each day and each age witnessing the progress—till at last, in God's time, the headstone shall be brought forth with shoutings. Meanwhile the various parts of the building are portioned out among the builders. Every Christian teacher has his place assigned him.

One little department of the work is his alone: he is responsible for it. It is left to him to choose his materials, and to work them in. No man stands over him from day to day to revise or to overhaul his labour. He may take, if he will, of the most valuable and the most beautiful; gold and silver and costly stones; marble, porphyry, jasper, crystal; lavishing upon his cherished toil every offering of devotion. He may take, if he will—no man forbidding him—of the vilest and the least durable: he may even insert wood into the temple wall; he may take hay to fill a crevice here, and stubble to stop a hole there; ignorant and undiscerning as to the proper material, and giving to the responsible task an unskilful hand and an uninstructed eye. And yet his contribution, however valueless, may rest on the one foundation. His own trust may be in the Saviour, and his own heart may be substantially right with God.

At length the day comes; the day of days: revealed amidst fire, it shall try the work: to each separate part the scrutiny shall address itself: the gold and the silver, and the solid beautiful stone, will abide the trial: but what of the wood and the hay and the stubble? Where shall they be in that searching ordeal? Vain will it be then to make excuses: vain to excuse, too late to repair. The bad workman must be content to suffer loss; to lose his wages: happy if he can escape, with life in his hand, through the scorching and searing and consuming flame.

Even thus shall it be with Christ's ministers in the day when the Son of Man is revealed. Judge ye whether they to whom an office so responsible and so perilous has been consigned—they before whom lies a future of judgment so critical and so fearful—are fit persons to be made into watchwords of party or into idols of worship; whether they do not

rather claim at your hands a reverent compassion, showing itself alike in thoughtful help and devout prayer.

Such is, I believe, the general aspect of the text and context. It will be perceived that we have understood by the opposite kinds of material, not persons, but doctrine; though we forget not the more usual application of this figure of the building to the lives and souls of individual Christian men. *Know ye not that ye are the temple of God? The temple of God is holy; which temple ye are. To whom coming, as unto a living stone...ye also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house. Ye are built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets...for an habitation of God through the Spirit.* But the similitudes of Scripture are plastic, not rigid. Nothing in the Church's history has been more fertile in discord and error than the tendency of theologians to stereotype metaphor. Sometimes within the con-

fines of one passage a various turn is given to the same figure. And in the instance before us it ought not, I think, to have been disputed that that building which in the 16th verse is a temple of men is in the 12th verse a structure of doctrine. In no other sense can I understand the marvellous conjunction before us; the work burned, and the workman saved.

Let me hasten to the application.

And first let us take the exact case contemplated by St Paul himself.

A man has devoted himself to the Church's ministry.

It is the case, present or future, of multitudes of those who hear me.

He has done so with sincerity. He believes earnestly in Jesus Christ. To lay any other foundation than that laid once for all in Him, would be abhorrent as much to his feeling of reverence as to his sense of duty.

Would to God, my brethren, that even this first assumption could be safely made of all! that there were none, in all days and in our days, who undertake the Christian ministry without one earnest loving thought towards Him who is its great subject! If that to which we are passing on is a word of anxious thought for all, that which we are first assuming is of itself a condemning word for some. *Other foundation,* St Paul says, *can no man lay:* and yet how many are essaying that impossible enterprise! How many even of the Church's pastors are bringing each man his little load of materials for the great building, and piling it up upon the cold naked earth, careless whether the one, the only foundation be under it or quite apart!

Christian brethren, might the thought be written in all our hearts, *It is an impertinence in me to assume the ministerial name, unless my conscience is witness that I go forth to*

bear it in behalf of Christ! Every man who enters a Pulpit or passes within the Altar-rails of an English Church, does so on the supposition, does so on the faith, of his being by choice and purpose a minister of Jesus Christ. That which he speaks, he speaks in Christ's name: if he comes there to speak his own words or to utter his own mind, he is an intruder and upstart, from hearkening to whom may God evermore save His true flock!

But the person whom St Paul has in view stands this test. The foundation is laid; laid once for all: he knows it, and he comes to build upon it. Is his danger therefore past? Is his ministry certain to prosper? Is his own reward sure?

He is still, St Paul says, on his trial. There is a profitable and an unprofitable ministry even among the faithful.

I would briefly indicate some of the anxieties of the office.

1. A man may believe in Christ, and yet not exercise aright the *Preacher's* office.

(1) For example. A man may interpret Scripture, and yet not bring Christ out of it. He may delight himself in the study; he may be skilful in comparing Scripture with Scripture; he may perceive with a marvellous insight the doctrinal contrasts and harmonies which fill the Volume; he may be wise in combining and reconciling where careless readers see only contradiction and confusion; he may attract listeners by the clearness of his exposition and the variety of his illustration: and yet in all this there may be no savour of Christ and no unction of the Spirit. Men may come and go, depart and return, week by week, where he ministers; may find information, find instruction; but not find edification, because they find not Christ.

This is one possibility. Here is an example of a ministerial work whose end is to be burned.

(2) Again, a man may be a sincere Chris-

tian, and may even in a sense preach Christ, and yet his work may be but as the wood or the stubble, because in the Divine he has lost the human: because, in other words, though he knows theology he knows not man; and though he understands something of the glory of the Saviour, he is ignorant of the application of that Gospel to the hearts and lives of men. His doctrinal statements are correct and ample: he can discourse with feeling and beauty upon the great revelations of grace: but there is no connecting link, in his preaching, between heaven and earth, between truth and life, between the Saviour of sinners and the sinner whom He came to save. Therefore the Gospel which he enforces floats above his hearers in a region cloudy and inaccessible: they hear the sound thereof, but the voice they hear not: the revelation of Christ is become again in his hands as *the letter which killeth,* rather than as *the spirit which giveth life.* The man should

have mixed with men: he should have lived in the homes, and dived into the consciences, and made his way into the hearts, of his people: he should have descended from the mount of Transfiguration, the glory still on his brow, to meet the demoniac child vainly struggling in the grasp of the strong man armed, and to say in Christ's name to the agonized father the all-powerful word, *If thou canst believe, all things are possible unto him that believeth.*

(3) Or it may be that all the energies of a ministry have been turned upon controversy; that a congregation which came together to be fed with *the sincere milk of the Word that it might grow thereby,* has been occupied week by week and year after year with vehement declamation or laborious argument against some form of error, supposed to be the peril of the times, and upon which the Preacher would concentrate all the anxieties and all the efforts of souls given him to guide and lives entrusted

to him to regulate. Parishioners of country towns and rural villages have been warned from the Pulpit, Sunday by Sunday through a long ministry, against impending assaults of Romanism or lurking snares of Rationalism, as though these were the most formidable influences to be apprehended by men of flesh and blood, exposed to the daily temptations, in their grossest forms, of the world, the flesh, and the devil. And while the good sense of one class of hearers has been offended and shocked by what they felt to be an unprofitable restriction of topics and an unchristian vehemence of polemics, there have been those on whom the effect of such teaching has been yet more injurious; persons who have but too implicitly followed its direction and surrendered themselves to its influence; *straining out the gnat* of heresy, only to *swallow the camel* of uncharitableness; or, it may be, neglecting altogether the weightier matters of the

Gospel Law, truth and mercy and piety and holiness, in the eager denunciation of errors which had no charm for them, or the suspicious investigation of stratagems which had no existence in fact. Of a ministry predominantly occupied with such subjects, however sincere the piety or however earnest the zeal of the minister, we cannot but fear that the issue must in many cases be that which is delineated in the text, *A work lost and burned up; a workman saved, yet so as by fire.*

(4) There is a fourth case, easily distinguishable from the former, in which a fatal deadness has fallen upon a ministry in the very attempt to communicate to it a vigorous life. In these days we are accustomed to loud complaints from the world, of the sameness and dullness and wearisomeness of Sermons. We have been rebuked and we have been ridiculed for our inability to make preaching attractive; we have been told that it is the preacher's

fault if an audience gathered at random cannot be made to listen to him with the same interest which is quick and lively enough over a newspaper or a novel. No allowance has been made for the unavoidable familiarity of the great truths of the Gospel; none for the necessary repetitions of its doctrines and reiterations of its precepts; none for the repugnance of a fallen nature, alike to promises which it counts visionary, and to duties which it finds irksome; none for the all-true saying of the inspired Word itself, *The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.* And it is not wonderful if men charged with this despised ministry, and eager to rescue it from these reproaches, have looked this way and that for the power to give life to their Sermons and (as they would say) reality to their Gospel. They have been told—and they

partly feel it true—that, could they but arrest the attention, all would be easy; that without this all must be vain: that, if they can catch the ear, if they can interest the mind, if they can show that they are concerned with real things, if they can but persuade men that preaching is not synonymous with wearying, that there is a chance of a Sermon not being dull, they may then go on to speak of things higher, things eternal; may introduce, now and then, or at last, something of the pure Gospel, and hope that, the ear once opened to listen, the heart also may eventually be moved to attend. In the meantime they have given themselves to the one aim of making their Sermons lively. They have counted nothing below the level of Pulpit gravity; nothing too secular or too mundane to be made the starting-point of Sunday exhortation. They have spoken of *giving a healthy tone to common life;* and this, not by raising earth to heaven, but

by bringing down the heavenly to the level of the earthly. They have forgotten that the Christian politician, and the Christian student, and the Christian man of business, come not together in the Lord's House to hear their own subjects discussed by one far less fitted to do so than themselves; but rather to be reminded of a subject higher and nobler than their own; a subject in which they may rest altogether from weekday toils and cares, and realize a loftier aim and a deeper unity, in things unseen, things heavenly, things Divine. It is a fraud upon these worthiest members of a Christian congregation, when the preacher, asked for living bread, thus offers them the lifeless stone. And yet even for this he has had his temptation, and he will have his reward. The world will flock after a preacher who is willing to use its language and discuss its subjects: they will call his levity real, and his worldliness sensible. Thus more and more preaching is emptied of

its solemnity; and the man who has enjoyed some reputation in his day as an *ambassador for Christ* divested (if not *ashamed*) *of his chain*, may find, when the fire tries his work, that, in making it lively, he took out of it its life; that, in seasoning it for the world's palate, he lost for it all the pungency of the salt of grace. Bound indeed by every tie of duty to make his preaching forcible, and to make it real, and to make it vocal to the conscience, and to make it applicable to the life, the actual living life, of those to whom he ministers, the Preacher does not well to forget that he has a stewardship all his own, that *a necessity is laid upon him*, and that *woe is unto him if he preach not the Gospel!*

2. But the work of the ministry is not all preaching. Nor have we exhausted our illustrations of the words now before us, when we have pointed out some of those directions in which the public ministrations of a believing

man may spend themselves in unprofitable labour.

A man may believe in Christ, and yet not exercise aright the *Pastor's* office.

To most natures it is a trying thing to follow up by assiduous week-day toil the instructions of the Sunday. There is a reserve in the utterance of deep feelings, and a delicacy in seeking the confidence of others on spiritual subjects, and an unskilfulness in entering, at once closely and without offence, into contact with consciences, and a repugnance (just, we believe, and Scriptural) to every approach, however distant, to the theory or practice of the confessional, which indisposes some of the best of men for a work requiring that they *be instant in season and out of season* in *watching for souls as they that must give account.* And along with these motives, the most favourable that can be suggested, for pastoral indolence or inefficiency, it must be remembered too that this

part of the work is less marked out for us than the more public by times and seasons; that it is by its very nature that which may be done either now or then, and left undone for this day and that, without either outraging the expectations of others or stirring into loud reproaches the voice of conscience within. When a few sick folk have been visited, when the school of the Parish has been inspected, when a demand or two of business or charity have been duly listened to and satisfied, there remains nothing beyond to claim as of necessity an instant activity, and the Pastor may return to his study or give himself to relaxation without any present consciousness either of ministerial unfaithfulness or a culpable indifference to duty.

And yet more and more do we feel that the work of which St Paul speaks in the text is chiefly a work of private personal influence upon the hearts and souls of living men. That labour which is to abide the revelations of the

Day; that labour which is not to be burned, but proved by the result of that last ordeal to have been substantial and permanent, because it has been heart-deep, soul-stirring, and life-transforming; must be done, in great part, in secret; done in the privacy of cottage-homes and by the unnoticed exertions of a perpetual self-sacrifice. And to these things many even good men are found by experience to be unequal. One man will content himself with half a day's toil, and then go forth to be the pleasant guest, the agreeable neighbour, or the amiable companion. Another will seclude himself within his own doors, accumulating stores of literary or theological knowledge, or seeking the fame or the usefulness of a writer at the cost of a neglected Parish and a wasted ministry. Another will turn all his thoughts to ceremony and ritual; adding without stint or grudging to the completeness of his Church's building, the beauty of its decoration, or the

number and variety of its services; but still turning aside from that close daily grappling with dormant consciences and accountable souls, in which shall be found a reality elsewhere wanting, and a reward promised only to patient continuance in toilsome and difficult and often thankless labour. And another, by an opposite developement of the same error, will hope to reach the high purpose of his ministry by an admirable arrangement of parochial machinery; will be satisfied to have covered every part of the field with well-laid plans and diligent deputies; expecting the good seed to spring up of itself from a perfect organization, and counting it his business not so much to win or even to go in quest of souls, but rather to preside over the working of a complex mechanism of agencies, upon which he can depend with confidence for the performance of God's work in the souls consigned to his oversight.

And we must not say that such a position

is wrong in itself, or that it can be avoided by all men. In that excessive and disproportionate growth of Parishes, which is the inheritance of this generation, there must be some ministries given to superintendence, if any ministries are to be made available for a more truly spiritual activity. Only we should remember that, just in proportion as any ministry is withdrawn from a direct personal contact with imperilled and struggling souls, in the same degree does it become not more but less honourable in itself, and at the same time more dangerous and less profitable to its holder. The less largely does it partake of the chief characteristic of the pastorship of souls, and the more cause has it to apprehend a miserable awakening in the day when some men's work shall be burned, even though they themselves be saved as by fire.

Regard for the peculiar aspect of the words before us—the work made futile, but the work-

man not condemned—has constrained me to limit thus far the range of their application. And indeed I know not that any application can be more serious or more awakening than that which lies on their surface. A Christian man, a Christian minister, has laboured all his life long—has preached five thousand Sermons —has been respected in private life, and not left without an auditory in public—and nothing has come of it! His work is burned up. Not one soul saved by his ministry. Not one life, inward and outward, really built up into a constituent stone of the Eternal Temple. Not one thing done, in these thirty or forty or fifty years, which can abide the trial by fire, or survive the awful day of the manifestation of the sons of God. Only just this—he himself saved. He himself escaping through the conflagration of a burning life's work, just with life in his hands, just to be suffered within the portals of salvation, as one who has lost his labour—

fined and mulcted, St Paul calls it, in all that he thought himself to have earned—but just with the bare *life given him for a prey!*

The thought is grave and saddening: I address some to whom, by God's grace, it may even be quickening and saving this day.

There are those here present, whose life is to be devoted to this work; the work of ministering before God in holy things. Suffer, my friends, an older man—one who for almost a quarter of a century has held this responsible office—to speak with you in all plainness of its hopes and fears. And yet more—how can it be otherwise?—yet more of the latter even than of the former. How it may be with others, I know not: for myself I must say that the experience of it is saddening even more than cheering. The question of the *foundation* is a grave one. Is the man himself certainly and personally acquainted with the great subject—with Christ Himself? Has there been, in his

days of youth and activity, a real honest grappling with the enquiry, *Who and what is Christ?* Has there been a trying, in the deep of the heart, of that strength which the Gospel says is in Christ only? Have natural faults, have youthful lusts, been seriously encountered and overcome, in that heart which is their spring, in that life which is their stream? and this, in the name and by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ? And has He, in these things, been found true and been found strong? Then, and then only, can you go forth with any confidence to build upon Him.

But even then, it seems, you may build, and build vainly. Not indeed—I can scarcely think it—while you remain in vital daily vigorous communion with Him who is the spring and source of grace. But it is the tendency of that bias of the Fall which is in all of us, to swerve by little and little from the closeness of that communion: not least—be ye

well assured of it—in that one sacred calling which seems to have in it the very guarantee of stedfastness. It is not so. God deals not so unequally with His creatures, as to suffer one to possess holiness by office, and to bid another seek it through prayer and watching: nay, there is, in the very handling of holy things, a new danger of familiarity, irreverence, and sinful boldness: they who dwell in the tabernacle may begin to tremble less than is due before the mercyseat: they who *bear the vessels* may be tempted to *take hold of the ark:* and then, if the holiest lose its awe, what shall reinspire it?

Thus by degrees those hallowed offices to which you now look forward with a godly fear, may become in a few short months things of routine, matters of course, professional necessities, and little more. It needs double watchfulness, in that one calling, to keep the soul low before God, and to keep the heart tender

for man. The edge of mere feeling will be insensibly blunted: public ministrations will lose their first awe, and private offices of charity their first love. In the same degree the work of teaching will become at once easier and less solemn: you will be tempted to a hastier preparation, both of thought and prayer, for the oft-recurring work of preaching: you will be weary of the old, the universal topics of grace and redemption: you will begin to look around you for texts less obvious, topics newer and less hackneyed, subjects of exposition more difficult and less profitable. You will then understand why one great body of professed Christians should remove their preachers every three years from the scene of ministration; as though the stimulus of novelty were needful from time to time for the hearer, and as though art must assist grace in sustaining the interest of the preacher. We Churchmen must cast ourselves more entirely upon the Spirit which quickens,

assured that the supply of His grace will ever be proportioned to the urgency of our need. Happy are they whom He so supports, in the hour of sinking spirits and flagging energies, that they still exercise themselves in digging from the mine and from the quarry the gold and silver and costly stone, and seize not with idle facility the wood cut to their hand, or the hay or the stubble which can be had for the asking!

If days like these—days of weariness and languor of soul—should be the portion (as they may be) of any of you who are now preparing to gird yourselves with the sacred armour, let the text of this afternoon press as it ought upon your conscience, and stir you to a new effort and a godlier zeal. Say to yourselves, *My work, God helping me, shall not be burned: my labour shall not have been lost, nor my life wasted. Poor and pitiful would be the reflection that peradventure, out of boundless exhaustless love, my own soul might just escape*

out of the wreck and ruin of a purposeless, profitless, squandered ministry; a sacred name borne in vain, and a Saviour's work shamefully trifled with! If my work is burned, it will be because I have so ministered as that none are the better for it; because no soul has been quickened by my Gospel, and no life transformed by my supervision. Shame then on the laggart who has let others perish, and only just looked to himself! Shame on the hireling pastor, who took no heed to his doctrine, and could not lash himself into energy in behalf of dying undying souls! God quicken in me yet once more the grace of repentance, and the grace of perseverance, the grace of Divine love, of Christian zeal, and of human charity!

And for us, and for all—whether engaged, or preparing to engage, in this work or that—work (as we speak) sacred, or work (as we speak) common—let the word of exhortation carry with it its own enlivening sound, while

it tells of a coming Day of world-wide, soul-deep, and life-embracing scrutiny. There are those, it says to us, whose work will be burned; the work of a whole life; judged justly, pronounced worthless, finally consumed and destroyed. That which is true of one calling is assuredly true of all. If even sacred work—and the work (remember) of a believing man—may be doomed to this burning; might we not say, Much more that work which was altogether of the earth; that work which had no profession of Christ in it; that work which sought only self, whether self-aggrandisement, self-ostentation, or self-humouring? How needful is it, Christian friends, that you, forecasting your life (as at this time) in youth, should first of all plan it well; plan it, that is, in the serious pondering of this question, *What is that work in which I can best serve God, and have something left of it when the fire tries?* I know indeed that there is no recog-

nized lawful calling of English life, in which a man may not serve God, and have something left of his work to follow him when he dies. But I know this also—and no false compliment should make us hide it—that there are professions in which there is the smallest possible material for usefulness, and professions in which there is the greatest: professions in which whatever a man does of good to his brother is done as it were by stealth and contrivance, or against the grain; done without any help from his profession, done in spite of it, and by seizing or making rare opportunities which it is more than probable that he will miss or lose; professions, on the other hand, not only full of openings for good, but themselves constituting a life-long opening; professions which are themselves a talent, and the chief of talents; summoning a man to daily acts of good, and loudly rebuking him if he does them not. Let the question, *In what manner of life can I,*

such as I am in character and in circumstances, most hopefully look for something to remain of my work in the great day of account? be deeply and diligently pondered beforehand by all whom God has placed here on the threshold of that manhood in which they are to live their probation and sow for their reaping.

And let us, older men, whose day of grace is already far spent, be like them and with them, at least thus far, in this questioning; that we determine, God helping us, not to find in the end that life has been a disappointment, because nothing real, nothing permanent, nothing of God and for God, has ever been done in it. Are we ministers of Christ? let us wait on our ministry. Are we instructors, are we watchmen and guardians of the younger and the less experienced? let us look to it that we desire with an unselfish zeal the soul's good of those for whom we labour. Are we men of letters, of science, of authorship? O, great

need then have we—we as much as any—to see to it that no self-seeking, no eager hungry pursuit of knowledge which is to be our own enjoyment, be the constraining motive of our diligence and of our toil. Let us see that we all—in various ways, for *there are diversities of operations*—yet with one end in view, for *of God and through God and to God are all things*—be indeed workmen at the great Temple; earnestly bringing to it and cheerfully lavishing upon it every faculty and every endowment, the gold and the silver and the precious stone of our individual being; that so, when the Day is revealed, and revealed in fire, we may hear the joyful commendation, *Well done, good and faithful servant, thou hast been faithful in a very little:* thou saidst indeed oftentimes below, *I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought and in vain;* yet now is thy reward before thee, and thy work safe with thy God!

II.

THE INDIVIDUAL HIRING.

II.

THE INDIVIDUAL HIRING.

MATT. XX. 7.

No man hath hired us.

THE rich young man has asked his question, and gone away sorrowful. Type of many rich men, and of many young men—of many great men and learned men and self-righteous men—in every land and age, he *came running* (St Mark says) in sign of eagerness; he *kneeled to* Jesus (St Mark says) and called Him *good*, in sign of reverence and of devotion; he proposed to Him the greatest of all questions, and listened respectfully to the Divine answer:

all this he did: and yet, when the call came home to him; bade him part with his treasure, and count all things else but loss for Christ; then he turned away: not in scorn, not in defiance, not in anger: *he was sad at that saying—he went away sorrowful—for he had great possessions.*

How is the same scene enacted year after year in a Christian country, within a Christian Church! Men want heaven: but they cannot part with earth. Men ask what they must do: but if it be not what they wish to do, they go away; go, like the wounded animal, with the arrow in them; go sad, go sorrowful; yet go, and go finally. They would have *done many things,* but they will not do the one thing: they will even bear a cross, and bear it manfully—but it is not the cross which Christ imposes, it is not the cross on which Jesus hung.

The sight of this departure, and the Saviour's comment upon it, drew from the still

self-ignorant Peter a self-congratulating exclamation. *Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee:* we have not refused the test of sincerity: we heard Thy call, and came after Thee without gainsaying and without dallying: *what shall we have therefore?* The words implied two errors. There was something of the Pharisee's tone in them: *God, I thank Thee that I am not as other men are.* And there was something of a bargaining spirit in them: *This have I done, now what shall I have?* And therefore the all-discerning Reader of hearts, the all-wise Physician of souls, while He frankly and fully renews to His disciple the great charter of promise—assures him of the *hundredfold* now, and of the *eternal life* hereafter—yet fails not to interpose, before He leaves the subject, the word also of warning. *Remember,* He says in effect, *the strange falls and risings which occur in the Gospel way; the marvellous disappointments and surprises, upsettings and*

reversals, which take place, in human life and Christian, between birth and the grave: how many, now first, shall one day be last; how many, now lagging behind, shall in the end outstrip the foremost, and even take their crown: thou standest by faith: boast not against the fallen: be not highminded, but fear.

To enforce this lesson, our Lord *added and spake a Parable;* from the midst of which the text of this day is taken.

The possessor of a vineyard wants labourers for its culture. At an early hour he visits the market-place of a neighbouring town, and finds there—the custom is still sometimes exemplified, we are told, in Eastern lands—a number of men waiting, spade in hand, for the opportunity of a hiring. He makes his bargain, and sends them into the vineyard.

The supply is insufficient. Again and again, as the day advances, he revisits the market-

place, and each time finds new candidates for employment and wages. These later recruits, unlike the earliest, accept a general instead of a particular promise: *Whatsoever is right,* He says, *I will give you.*

The day wears to its close, yet even then—one hour only from sunset—the proprietor repeats his visit to the place of hiring. Finding some, at that latest hour, still unoccupied, he asks them, *Why stand ye here all the day idle?* And when they reply, *Because no man hath hired us,* he removes the excuse by engaging them for himself.

And now the even is come. The steward is directed to begin with the last-engaged, and to give them their hire. To the astonishment of all—their own not least—they received each one the denarius which was to be the wages of the day. The unwonted generosity rouses the expectation of an advance for all. The first-hired thought now that the bargain for

the denarius would be replaced by a more liberal scale of recompense. What was their disappointment, when they found themselves held to the engagement, and repaid, for twelve hours of toil, with the piece given for one! They ventured to remonstrate against this iniquitous equality. *These last,* they said, *have wrought but one hour; and thou hast made them equal unto us, which have borne the burden and heat of the day.* But the reply was ready and peremptory. *Friend, I do thee no wrong:* was not the denarius thy stipulation? thou hast it: what if another, out of my mere bounty, has it too? *Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own?* art thou to grudge and be dissatisfied, because it pleases me to be liberal?

Even thus is it, our Lord says, *in that work and that destiny of human life, for the sake of which the Parable was spoken. There too shall there be later workers and earlier. There too*

shall there be first called and after called. God giveth not account of his matters. What if it pleases Him, of whom are all things, to call the despised Gentile, late in time, into Israel's heritage, and as it were of the stones to raise up children to Abraham? What if He shall stop, in the mid career of unbelief and persecution, a man whom He is pleased to speak of as already a chosen vessel, and set him, born out of due time, side by side with thee in the ranks of the Apostleship? Or what if, as the world runs its round, it shall be His good pleasure, now and then, to change, late in life, by the miracle of His grace, a scoffer or a libertine, a self-ruined sinner or a dying malefactor, into a monument of mercy? What is that to thee? Canst thou not rejoice, with a joy disinterested and noble, over these proofs of the sovereignty of thy Sovereign, of the Omnipotence of that grace which is thy hope? Take good heed to thyself that thou grudge not against thy brother!

that thou compare not thine own early call and long persistence with his wasted youth and late repentance! Such comparisons are a bad sign in thee. They show not the mind which was in Christ Jesus. If He had thought of merit, no man—neither the other, nor yet thou—had seen salvation. Look to thyself: for this very disposition is a sign of danger. The first may be last, as well as the last first. Nay, remember, that in this life no man is absolutely safe for heaven. Not only may the order change, and the foremost of today be the hindmost of tomorrow: more yet, and worse than this: the fairest promise of grace may be reversed, blighted, ruined altogether: the indulgence of one fault is of the nature of a final fall: many be called, but few chosen.

Such may be the contexture and such the main scope of the Parable as originally uttered to the first disciples. But it has been well said, *These doctrinal narratives of Jesus are*

like many-sided precious stones, cut so as to cast their lustre in more than one direction. To them may be applied, with all reverence, the words spoken by St Paul in regard to one of the plain patriarchal histories, *Which things are an allegory.* They are so framed and so recorded as to bear a meaning not so much other than, as besides, that which lies on their surface. Just as in the narration of a family discord within the curtains of a Patriarch's tent, there lies concealed a prophecy of the everlasting conflict which is betwixt the Church of God and the world of man; a conflict of natural and spiritual, of earthly and heavenly, of faith and sight, of Christ and sin; so that we may behold there, as in a glass, two dispensations, and two states, and two characters, and two destinies, ever repeating themselves in the history of all time: even so, even more it may be, we can discover in our Lord's Parables a variety and a versatility and a manifoldness of

teaching, which renders them ever new as ever constant; applicable to every changing circumstance, to every congregation of the Church and to every individual amongst His people.

And for this day I desire to separate from the rest of the Parable before us the five words of the text itself; hoping and praying that they may be so carried home to the hearts here lying *naked and opened* before the eye of God, that a new start may be taken by some in the life of Christ—a new hope quickened, and an altered life begun.

The lord of the vineyard says to some whom he finds loitering in one of life's market-places, *Why stand ye here all the day idle?* And their answer is, that no man has hired them.

The fragment of the Parable is itself a Parable.

1. There is a God who concerns Himself about us; looks upon us with an intuition as

keen as it is merciful; observes where we are, and what; how the life is spent, how the heart is disposed; knows by what precise steps we have mounted, or else descended, to our present standingplace; comes in, as it were, day by day, to notice and to question: nay, needs not to come in, because He is here; here, in the necessity of a Divine Omnipresence; here, in the spontaneity of a Divine Love.

2. And this God has a work going on amongst His creatures, and a vineyard in which that work has to be done.

Doubtless He has a work going on everywhere: space and time are alike full of Him: *His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, the eyes of all wait upon Him, He telleth the number of the stars, He openeth His hand and filleth all things living with plenteousness.*

But all these are works in which man cannot aid Him. In these things He works

alone; alone, with the Son of His love, and with the Spirit of His power: for these things He hath no vineyard, nor doth He ask of us, concerning these things, *Why stand ye idle?*

The vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel. The work for which He employs man is the work of man's culture: it is wrought in the Church of His redeemed, and the living energies of His redeemed are the workmen therein.

The work is a twofold work. It has an inward and it has an outward aspect.

(1) The individual soul is a vineyard, and itself has the charge of it. The watching and tending, the keeping and guarding, of the heart within—that heart out of which are the issues of the life—this is one chief department of God's work: to cleanse this from noisome and deadly weeds, to plant this with the choicest vine, to keep it night and day (as the Prophet writes)

under God's keeping, to subject it every moment (as the Prophet writes) to God's watering, to seek for it evermore the dew of His blessing, the rain of His grace, the sunshine of His countenance, and the furtherance of His increase; is one part, the first and foremost part, of that work, with regard to which He says to His creatures, *Go ye into my vineyard, and whatsoever is right I will give you.*

(2) And life too is a vineyard. I speak now not of the individual soul, but of the life of man as it is lived among his fellows.

The home is one part of it. The life of the family: in which each one (to speak generally) is at first a son and a brother; afterwards a master, a husband, a father; has to comport himself either thus or thus, towards his associates, in various relations, within the walls of a common dwelling: in presence, kindly, considerately, tenderly, lovingly—or else (if so it be) coldly, selfishly, thoughtlessly, churlishly;

in absence, with longing loving thoughts, frequent communication by letter, a resolute purpose to do honour to his name and bring joy to his home—or else (if so it be) with practical neglect, careless forgetfulness, long intervals of silence, a reckless disregard of home wishes, interests, and prayers—it may be, even a devouring of a father's substance with harlots, and a dishonouring of a spotless name by wicked riotous living. Here is one little spot of the outward vineyard—home, kindred, family—in which God bids us work, and in which many, rather than work, will stand (in God's sight) all the day idle.

Every community in which we are temporarily or permanently incorporated, would furnish an equally just and true example. Such is the community of a School or a College: in each of which we may—yea, we must—either do good or do evil. If we set a bright example of innocence and industry, of courage

and devotion, of faithful friendship and honourable subordination; if we make no secret of being Christians, though we neither obtrude that faith offensively on another nor parade it ostentatiously in ourselves; if we do the work which is set us, cultivate the talents given, make preparation for future usefulness by laying up those stores of knowledge which (in most cases) must now or never be acquired; and all this, not in feverish eagerness, not in the greedy pursuit of honour, not in the misplacing or interchanging of ends and means, but on principle, as a duty, with a view to the long future and to the boundless age: then, thus far, we are labourers in God's vineyard: in this most critical season of life we are already doing His work, and seldom—never within my experience—has a youth thus spent been followed by a worthless manhood or a wretched old age. *Such as are planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish*

in the courts of the house of our God. They also shall bring forth more fruit in their age.... That they may show how true the Lord my strength is: and that there is no unrighteousness in Him.

The river of life flows on, and becomes parted into a thousand streams. We sit here by the well, drawing from a common source the water of Divine and human knowledge. But soon this place will know us no more: for good or for evil, the time of our sojourning here will have been accomplished, and we must go forth, full or empty, resolved or purposeless, to do or to neglect the work of God in a wider and a more various vineyard.

I cannot follow today—the time forbids me, even if the track were disclosed—the diverse fortunes of this which is now a congregation, as it spreads itself over the manifold fields, at home or abroad, of English life. Men of wealth and leisure—men of public or professional ac-

tivity—clergymen, lawyers, merchants, soldiers, politicians—your *diversities of operation* will be as many, as your tastes and characters, your principles and ambitions, your length of days and earthly destinies, are various. Thirty years hence, or twenty, or ten, and the All-seeing Eye alone will be able to re-gather within its ken the members of this one concourse. Now so closely united in place and duty and interests—then scattered to the four winds in work and in habitation, some gone already to their reckoning, others still sowing, certainly if unconsciously, for the world's last harvest!

And yet—for this is the subject—amidst all this variety there will be a unity still. You cannot escape, go where you may, the call to be God's workmen. His vineyard is coextensive with earth, and his labourers are, or might be, not one here and one there, but all human beings—men—mankind. God bids the *clergyman* to go into His vineyard; bids him handle

sacred implements devoutly and for His glory; bids him set before himself one object—to make Christ known upon earth—to *save himself and them that hear him.* And the clergyman may either obey this call or disobey it. He may, if he will, *stand idle* at the very gate, amidst the plants or beside the tower and winefat, of the vineyard. There is nothing in that sacred calling which enforces or secures devotion. Nor is the *call* to him substantially different from the call to any other. God calls the lawyer too, and the soldier, and the statesman, to go and work in His vineyard. You escape not the sound of that voice, though you *rise up* (like a Prophet of old) *to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. Even there shall His hand lead thee, and His right hand shall hold thee.* He bids you make life His vineyard, and work in it for Him. He bids you, He bids us all, alike and equally, first to work for Him in the vineyard of the

soul, and then to work for Him in the vineyard of the life. He bids us, in other words, to believe in Jesus Christ with all our hearts; to look to Him alone for salvation; and to *live no longer to ourselves, but unto Him who died for us and rose again.* He bids us to love God with all our strength, and to love man, for His sake, as ourselves. He bids us set before ourselves, late and early, in youth and age, this one object; so to live as to make others better —so to live as to make God known.

3. Friends and brethren, this is, in brief, that call of which we speak today; the call into God's vineyard. And now what say we? You are here—none of you quite in the early morning—that is gone by: say, at the very best, *about the third hour* of life; some precious years already behind you; gone, yet not done with: and we are here with you, it may be *at the ninth hour,* it may be—God only knows—already *at the eleventh:* and still the

same call—calm, grave, patient, longsuffering—is in all our ears; *Go, work today in my vineyard!* And what are we answering to it? *Have we gone?* Are we at work there—as already described—at work in God's vineyard of the soul? at work in God's vineyard of the life?

Or are we, as in God's sight, still standing idle in the world's great market-place? We may be diligent men, as man counts diligence, and yet utterly idle in the account of God: *Ephraim is an empty vine,* saith the Prophet: why? *he bringeth forth fruit to himself:* thus a selfish life is an idle life, when the weights and measures of the sanctuary are applied to it: and where, O where is he amongst us, whose life is not selfish?

Or are we, once again, saying to the heavenly Summoner, *I go, Sir,* and yet not going? always about to enter—always promising, intending, resolving to enter—always just on

the point of being religious, only just waiting, for this moment and that, to go into God's vineyard, to be His entirely, and His for life? O the procrastinating spirit, in these matters, which is in all of us! None have resolved against religion: God forbid! but where is that prompt and vigorous action, in the things of the soul, which distinguishes so many of you in the exercises of the body and in the activities of the intellect?

Or are we, yet once more—for to this point I am tending—saying, in reply to the Divine question, *Why stand ye here all the day idle? Because no man hath hired us?* Yes, there may be other reasons, and many of them, why we are not better men, and more earnest, and more religious: there may be a deep indwelling spirit of doubt, making evidence inconclusive, and stopping prayer at its source: or there may be some cherished bosom lust, which must go if Christ comes, and which

we cannot and will not and scarcely profess to dismiss: these things there may be: and they account at once for any idleness, and any loitering, and any disobedience to the summons into God's vineyard, His twofold vineyard, the vineyard of the soul and the vineyard of the life: but there is also, in many, a subtler but not less real impediment than either of these: and it is specially with a view to this hindrance that I chose the exact words of the text, *No man hath hired us.*

It is common enough, no doubt, to deal in this place with the difficulties of belief; to encounter the prevalent forms of doubt, and to furnish you over and over again with reasons strong and ample for the faith which ought to be in us. And perhaps it is not uncommon to deal in this place with the other obvious impediment, that which springs from the state of the heart in reference to definite sin; that which keeps a man back from a religious life

by enchaining him to some sinful habit which he is powerless of himself to break through. But I would take rather a case such as *this.*

A man is deeply convinced, in conscience and heart, of the duty of living a Christian life. He is not so foolish as to justify to himself the postponement of such a life to a more convenient season. He knows that if there be a time suitable to the love of God and man, it is the season of youth; *before the evil days come, and the years in which he will say, I have no pleasure in them.* And therefore he not only desires to be religious, but he would give all he possesses to live the life of God.

But in the midst of these good desires and holy aspirations he finds himself again and again checked and hindered by some form or other of this question, *What right have I to regard myself as a child of God? How do I know that I am entitled to call God my Fa-*

ther? It is presumptuous in one so unworthy and so sinful, to enter upon a life which is hypocrisy if it be not heart-deep, presumption if it be not Divinely sanctioned. If I am to go out on any errand of charity; if I am to visit a poor or a sick person, or to perform any of the offices of religious ministration; I must do so on the supposition that I have a right to be a Christian. If I am to say a word of counsel or warning to a friend whose soul is in danger, or in any other definite way to endeavour to make Christ known as the Saviour of sinners, I must do so with the tacit assumption that I am myself a disciple. If I am even to kneel down to pray—except indeed my prayer be the mere vague inarticulate muttering of a distressed and enquiring soul—I must do so on the ground of a relationship to God which belongs only to a Christian. And these are just the assumptions which I cannot make. I see others pressing into the vineyard: they seem to have

no doubt as to the appropriation of the summons: they tell me they know that God is their Father, and that their service is accepted of Him for the Lord's sake. For myself, I can only answer, when the Divine question is put to me, Why standest thou here all the day idle? Because, Lord, no man hath hired me.

This is a hindrance which in many persons begins early, and ends late, or never. It keeps back many a thoughtful and many a well-disposed man from ever entering with quiet confidence upon the work of either the inward or the outward vineyard. And many things foster it. Evangelical doctrine itself has too much cherished it. The demand for conversion —just and needful as it is—may be so put as to deter. Conversion, on an Apostle's lips, was a *turning from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God.* It was the trumpet-call of Gospel hope. He did not say, *Wait till you are converted: wait till something has*

passed within you: wait till you have fear and penitence and faith and hope: and then come to Christ. Rather he said, *This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation; Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, and therefore to save you: the work is His; the work is done: you are included because the world is included: He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.*

And while this was his language to the idolatrous Gentile and the blaspheming Jew, what was it to the community of the already baptized? Was it, in addressing a Christian parent, *Pray for the conversion of your child?* Was it, *Watch over him and influence him and pray God for him, if perhaps—later on in youth, or it may be in remote manhood—he may receive the grace of conversion, and be able at last to call your God his God?* And was it, if he ever deigned to address himself

to the child, *Cry out as you may, in the ignorance and blindness of your heart, for a converting grace which shall at last overbear nature and make God your God? think not to say within yourself, I am one of the baptized, I have a Christian man for my father, and therefore I am within the pale of the covenant and the reach of grace: rest not in such vain confidences, but seek conversion as your one need, and enter at last, as your father entered, through the strait gate of a bitter penitence and a trembling hope?* O how different the blessed encouragement actually written on that sacred page! *Else were your children unclean, but now they are holy. Children, obey your parents in the Lord*—already there, already *in the Lord*, because you are among the consecrated, children of grace: *And, ye fathers, bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.* Yes, the Redemption is world-wide: and the appropriation of Redemption is coextensive with the

baptized. He who is born into the world is born into a redeemed world: he who is dedicated to Christ in Baptism *has* his call, has his promise, has his consecration and his sonship. He cannot say afterwards, *No man hath hired me.* He must not say afterwards, *I know not whether God has summoned me; whether God recognizes me as inside His vineyard; I must wait till something passes within me; some voice perhaps of effectual calling, which shall interpret to me and bring into me Christ's Gospel; and then peradventure I shall be justified in addressing God as my Father, and setting myself to work for Him in a world which shall have become for me His vineyard.* The world, because it is redeemed, *is* His vineyard: and I, because I am a baptized man, *am* His workman.

The lengthening experience of life, and an enlarging intercourse with human consciences, strongly impresses us, Christian friends, with

the prevalence of this hindrance to a devoted life. So fertile is the ingenuity of that self-righteousness which is in all of us by nature, that, when it is hunted out of this lurking-place, it ever seeks refuge in that; and when it has become an axiom of religion that we are saved not by works but by faith, then faith itself is made into a work, and placed not in the light of the hand which just receives out of Christ's fulness, but rather of the condition which must be satisfied before we can even come to receive. And thus also the blessed grace of repentance is not set before men as the self-renunciation and self-abhorrence which arises out of the sight of God's holiness and of the cross of Christ, but rather as some ugly and repulsive preliminary which must be brought with us ready-made as our passport and introduction into the very possibilities of grace. The cry, *No man hath hired me,* goes up still from many a distressed and sin-laden heart,

even within the precincts of God's sanctuary, even within *the Church which He hath purchased with His own blood.*

If there be amongst us this day but one person who has feared hitherto to write himself among God's people; one soul which cannot see its election, one ear which cannot hear its calling; let that person try this day the experiment of a brighter and more assured hope: let him cast away, once and for ever, these lingering vestiges—for such they are—of a subtle and paralyzing self-righteousness: let him cast himself upon the universality of the Redemption, upon the individuality of the baptismal sealing, and say unto God, *Doubtless Thou art my Father—my Father and the guide of my youth: this God shall be my God for ever and ever; He shall be my guide unto death —yea, through death, and even for evermore!*

It is an evil thing and bitter to stand all the day in the marketplace idle, because we

cannot see that any man hath hired us. No life is more miserable than that which halts between two purposes and two opinions; misses both worlds; and, with duty felt and Christ believed in, yet never sets itself to do the one or to serve the other.

The Parable speaks of a laborious calling, and makes the workman complain of the burden of the day and the burning desert wind. My friends, that burden is not avoided, that wind is not escaped, by those who stand idle. Life will have its load for each one of us, whether in God's vineyard or out of it. The cares of life, the toils of life, the sorrows of life, are not lightened by living to ourselves. The scorching Sirocco will beat upon us equally—the sudden access of calamity, inward or outward; the cruel blast of calumny, or the withering breath of disappointment—whether we be keeping close to Christ, or living without God in the world. The only difference will be, Shall

we have a Friend with us in all, a Friend constant in love and changeless as eternity? or shall we live alone in spirit, and *die* (terrible words) *to ourselves?* The choice is ours now: God give us grace to make that choice wisely!

The longest day has its evening: and so is it with the long day of life. At last the Lord of the vineyard shall say to His steward, *Call the labourers, and give them their hire.* If you are ever tempted to count religion difficult or duty irksome; to compare your lot, as one recognizing the call of God and desiring to do the will of Christ, with the easier and more self-indulgent career of a man who still lives for himself; then look onward, across a few, more or less toilsome and trying, years below, to that sweet hour of calm, that sunset which is also a dawn, when the voice of God Himself shall release you from service, and bid you enter for ever the rest and the inheritance. None will say then, that he has either laboured too earn-

estly, suffered too severely, or waited too long. *God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.*

III.

THE REMEDIAL DISCIPLINE OF DISEASE AND DEATH.

PREACHED IN AID OF THE FUNDS OF ADDENBROOKE'S HOSPITAL.

III.

THE REMEDIAL DISCIPLINE OF DISEASE AND DEATH.

1 COR. XI. 30—32.

For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.

EVERY School has its work and its discipline: it is so with the School of God.

We have spoken on two occasions of life's work: to day (as the special occasion bids us) we are to speak a few plain words upon God's discipline.

And we choose for this purpose one of those unique texts of which we spoke at the outset of this brief course: a text embedded in a passage of undying interest, in reference to the most distinctive and the most sacred of Gospel ordinances, the holy Sacrament of the body and blood of our Saviour Christ; but itself too so marvellous in its disclosure of unexpected dealing—so solemn in its warning, and withal so bright with blessed hope—that it courts examination and rewards diligent study, if the presence (not unsought) of the inspiring Spirit be with us in the reading, the hearing, and the pondering.

The idolatry of antiquity is one of the many opposite dangers which beset the Church of all time. Just better, it may be, than the lust of innovation or the vanity of self-satisfaction, it is yet itself an error, and it may run on into a sin. It is an ingratitude to God for many present advantages, it is a disparagement

of the guiding and developing hand of His Providence, it is almost a denial of the assurance of Christ, *Lo, I am with you alway,* if we imagine (as many have done) that the Church sprang full-grown and perfect from the new birth of Pentecost, and degenerated from that original maturity in proportion as she advanced, by years or by centuries, from her nativity and her baptism. We learn a different lesson from the inspired page itself. It is not enough to show that a certain thing was believed in primitive Ephesus, or done in primitive Corinth, in order to prove that the one was true or the other right; that either the one or the other was according to the will of God, or a portion of the integral *faith delivered once for all to the saints.*

The chapter now before us lifts the veil from one surprising feature of the Church of Corinth in Apostolical times.

If there be an institution guarded and

fenced by a peculiar reverence, it is the ordinance of Holy Communion. Even to a fault it has been so. Men careless in life and unbelieving in opinion—utterly indifferent how they profaned or trifled with ought else in the Christian faith or worship—have yet shrunk, with a superstitious dread, from tampering with the Lord's Supper. To that one sacred memorial they have transferred all the reverence and all the scrupulosity which ought to have been diffused over everything ordained by the word or consecrated by the touch of Christ. If only they abstained from defiling by a worldly or sinful contact that one last bequest of dying love, they thought it but a small thing to desecrate the ordinance of Common Prayer: nay, they thought it but a small thing to break the command through life, or to postpone the command till death, to *do this*, to eat of the bread and drink of the cup, in remembrance of the Cross and Passion. It was no hypocrisy, they thought,

to meet in the congregation for worship; no untruth to repeat Creeds which for them meant nothing, or to join in Litanies which for them asked nothing; no profaneness to exchange smiles or whispers in the sanctuary, to turn Sermons into ridicule, or to point their sarcasms and wing their jests with Scripture; provided only they regularly turned their backs upon the Table spread for Communion, and stood aloof from that one single act to which they confined their whole idea of religious profession and ceremonial sanctity.

How far this feeling—predominant in the Church of England within the recollection of many, and not without a certain rough use in keeping consciences alive and the very idea of sanctity extant amongst men—may have been formed or fostered by the language (in some parts) of this very chapter, it is needless to enquire and unprofitable to know. But it is certainly remarkable that the one point on

which the conscience of the 18th century was awake, was a point on which the conscience of the first age (in some communities) was already dormant. Here was the Church of Corinth, in St Paul's own lifetime, desecrating the Lord's Supper by disorder and intemperance. Associating with it in sign of brotherly Christian union a common meal—to be begun or closed by the celebration of the sacred rite of Communion itself—they made it first of all an opportunity of displaying the worst selfishnesses of class and the worst discords of party, and they ended by an exhibition of excess and intoxication, everywhere wretched and shameful, but here shocking too and horrible.

It is in the course of his reproof of this profanation that St Paul introduces the words of the text.

You must have forgotten, he says, the time and the object of the institution of this ordinance of Communion. You must have forgotten

that the time was the night in which Christ our Lord was betrayed, and the object the commemoration of His death for sin. *Take, eat,* He said: *This is my body...This cup is the new testament in my blood...As often* therefore *as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till He come.* Judge ye whether this act can be done *unworthily*—done, as he afterwards explains the words, with no discernment of the Lord's body, no perception of the difference between this and common bread, this and common wine—and no injury and no punishment follow! *He that eateth and drinketh* (in this sense) *unworthily, eateth and drinketh*—not indeed, as our Version gives it, *damnation,* but still *judgment*—and God's judgment—*to himself, as not discerning* (*distinguishing*) *the Lord's body. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.* These are examples of the *judgment* spoken of. For profaning thus the Lord's Supper, there had been

amongst them special visitations of the Divine displeasure, in divers forms of weakness and sickness, nay (in some cases) even of premature death. And why, he asks, why these inflictions? For lack of a self-discipline which would have rendered needless the discipline of God. *If we judged ourselves;* if we (more exactly) *discerned* or *discriminated* ourselves—it is the very word used above for *discerning the body;* if we would but look into our own selves, exercising there that power of discrimination between right and wrong which God has given to all of us in conscience; if we would only sit in judgment ourselves within, entering, with a diligent introspection, into the state of heart and life, so that we might drag to the light of day our hidden obliquities, and with a resolute will cast them out of us and spare not; then *we should not* thus *be judged:* taking into our own hands in this life the Judge's office, we should, with His gracious approval—let us say it with

reverence—take it out of His: He who *doth not willingly afflict* would see affliction to be needless, and suffer us to walk in the clear sunny day of a Father's reconciled countenance. *If we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.* That judgment, which we might avert; that judgment of God, which a severe self-judgment might altogether have prevented and set aside; is yet, even when it falls, not a *damnation:* rather is it a *chastening that we should not be condemned;* a fatherly discipline exercised betimes in this life, that we should still be owned in the great day, as among the *washed and justified and sanctified;* the baptismal cross not obliterated, the seal of the Spirit not erased. Pain and sickness, suffering and death itself, may be, in God's hand, a remedial discipline; the careless inconsistent Christian may even be *delivered unto Satan for*

the destruction of the flesh, and yet all this may have in view an ulterior mercy; *that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.*

The subject is not more interesting than it is instructive.

1. For, first of all, what does it say to us as to God's concern in individual lives and destinies?

We sometimes speak, and more often feel, as though a life mentioned in Holy Scripture were made, by the very fact of that sacred contact—by its admission, I mean, in the manner of example or warning, to a place in the record of Inspiration—of a wholly different order and kind from a life such as men live now; as though it must have had a value and an elevation and a grandeur more worthy of God's notice and of God's interest than the doings or the sufferings, the fortunes or the destinies, of a mere commonplace being like our own. I know that the fallacy vanishes in the stating: we see that it

is an illusion, and yet to-morrow we shall feel it still. I desire to fasten upon our minds, while we can, this obvious yet ill-learnt lesson; the equality of all persons in God's regard: the absence, in His sight, of any such distinctions as those between great and small, sacred and common, Scripture characters and characters of common daily, English life: and to draw from it this inference, so simple in sound yet so deep in its penetration, that there is not one person at this moment present, in these seats and these galleries, in the management of whose life, as a matter of individual guidance and discipline, God Himself, *the God of the spirits of all flesh*, is not as directly, as immediately interested as ever He was in the spiritual affairs of these men and women at Corinth, upon whom, His own Word tells us, He sent weakness and sickness and even death, to punish their sins and to save their souls. Yes, my friends, there was nothing peculiar in

interest, and there was scarcely anything exceptional in treatment, in the cases of those Corinthians. These young lives, here making preparation for the work of time and for the solemn alternative of eternity, are just as precious, every one of them, in the regard of God, as though they had been brought into the Gospel covenant through the preaching of an Apostle, disciplined for heaven by a ministry of miracle, or placed on record in the Scripture page for the instruction and edification of latter days of the Church. I believe that the thoughtful amongst you, who mark the turnings of life and take heed to the signals of grace, could give—were the heart opened, as it is not to man, in frank confession—an account of God's dealings with you personally, in the few years already gone by, such as would satisfy you, if it convinced not others, of a hand guiding and guarding, a will purposing and ruling, yea a Spirit suggesting, striving, and influencing, as

minutely as if you alone were its care, as really as if your ears could even hear the voice behind you, saying, *This, this is the way: walk thou in it.*

Whoso is wise will ponder these things: and he shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord.

2. Again, I would beg you to notice the value here assigned to a position within the Church of Christ.

These Corinthians were full of faults, and the hand of God was upon them in punishment. For their sins *many were weak and sickly among them, and many slept.* And yet, just because they were inside the Church, all this judgment was a chastening. Just because they were men who had listened to the Gospel call, and had come out from the mass of mankind to enter the Christian fellowship, and on the strength of that profession of faith had been subjected to the rite of initiation, and were now baptized men, partaking in Christian ordinances

and submitting themselves to Christian teaching, they had *hope in their end:* what they suffered, they suffered not as punishment only, but distinctively as discipline: if they even died under the rod of chastening, it was in the hope that they might not be condemned with the world. We need the thought, every one of us, not to make us careless, but to make us thankful. There is a difference—a real and radical difference—between the inside and the outside of that Church which is Christ's body. If we even wish it, we cannot obliterate that mark. *That which cometh into your minds*—God forbid that it should come there—*shall not be at all, that ye say, We will be as the heathen:* you cannot be as the heathen. Worse or better: better certainly in position—and what is that but saying, partakers of a heavenly calling which will not let you alone; possessors of a hope, and heirs of a heaven, which God the Holy Ghost *will* remind you of, and press upon

you, and make a sting and goad to you if you will not have it for your joy and your crown? such is your condition: Redemption is yours, because the world is redeemed: but Redemption is yours beyond this, because you have been baptized, and because you were thereby brought into that right and that ownership and that use of the Divine relationship, which never again, save by open apostasy, can you be deprived of while life is in your body. And because you are thus within the Christian fellowship, therefore all that befalls you has in it at least the possibility and the peradventure of salvation. *That you be not condemned with the world* is inscribed upon every disappointment, every bereavement, every sorrow, every cross; inscribed upon pain and sickness, inscribed upon desolation and death; till the day of grace be ended, and a God with whom there is no respect of persons must sit in judgment finally upon your soul.

Such is the reality, of which there are many counterfeits, of a Christian Church membership. It is not that it entitles you, faithless or believing, to a share of *the inheritance of the saints in light:* but it is, that it sets you within the school and home of God; gives you the right to every promise, and the possession of every influence for good; places you within the sound of the inward teaching, and makes every incident, joyful or adverse, of earthly existence, a positive intentional discipline of Divine love.

He therefore that despiseth despiseth not man but God, who hath also given unto us His Holy Spirit.

3. Thirdly, and in particular, the text assigns a tender and merciful character to the graver and more penal exercises of the Divine government over human lives. Pain is one of God's ministers—death itself may be one of God's ministers—for the salvation of His Church from the condemnation of the world.

(1) That intermixture of loss and gain, of grief and joy, of injury and reparation, which pervades human life, has its exact counterpart in the Book of God.

Fallen man had to gather his one hope out of the words of a curse. *It shall bruise thy head* was communicated for man's comfort in the same breath which said to the serpent, *And thou shalt bruise his heel.* And when that hope reached its fulfilment in the cross of Jesus Christ, then was it seen that the two things, the curse and the blessing, were to be completed and consummated together: in the very wounding of man's heel was to be accomplished the crushing of the serpent's head. Even so has it been in all the minor fulfilments, before and since, of that comprehensive prophecy. In the suffering has lain the healing. Out of pain has sprung health, out of sorrow joy, and out of death life. Pain, sorrow, death, each in its turn has been God's minister to His Church for good.

We have seen this exemplified in a thousand ways.

The indirect benefits of pain are many. We owe to pain the existence of whole departments of salutary ministration. The office of the Christian nurse, the office of the Christian physician, a large part of the office of the Christian Clergyman, is the creation of pain. Such Institutions as that for which I ask your help today—institutions in which a self-denying charity ministers day by day to suffering man—owe their existence to pain. Every private home becomes in its turn a hospital: pain enters, and with it a new influx of love, a new effort of self-forgetfulness, and a new strength of unity. The Lord Jesus Christ Himself would have ministered upon earth in vain, if there had been no suffering hearts to claim His sympathy, and no diseased bodies to feel His power.

We have called these the indirect benefits of pain. It exercises virtues in man, it called

forth graces from the Saviour, which, but for it, must have lain dormant.

Not less evident are the more direct uses of suffering; those of which the Apostle wrote, *For this cause many are weak and sickly among you...chastened of the Lord, that they should not be condemned with the world.*

The first effect of pain is reality. Nothing so brings a man to himself. The vain man, the conceited man, the affected man, the incessant jester, the actor of a part, the wearer of a mask, the assumer of a character—let sharp pain come upon him—becomes natural instantly. You see him then—he sees himself then—as he is. The habit of years drops off from him in a moment: the touch of pain has stripped him bare, and he lies open, before God and man, in the secret strength or weakness of reality and truth.

And the second effect of pain is humility. Not that poor feigned thing which men in

health call humility: the general confession, *I am a sinner,* with its usual gloss, when it is hard pressed, *We are all sinners:* not this: but that humility which springs out of a momentary glimpse of God; that humility which is impressed upon me by the giant grasp of one who is evidently stronger than I; by the conviction, wrung from me by suffering, that I can no more will away or charm away this consciousness of agony than I can say to the Sun, *Stand thou still,* or to the Ocean, *Thus far shalt thou come, and no farther.* The truth of my own helplessness is forced upon me at last; and with it the reality of the Divine strength.

And then, out of this, springs oftentimes, under God's influence, a third thing, which is called in Holy Scripture a seeking and feeling after God. If I am absolutely at the mercy of One who is stronger than I—of One in comparison with whom *I am a worm and no man* —were it not well that I should enquire, *Who*

is He, and what? Has He, who is thus strong over me, any will concerning me? Does it concern Him that I should be this, or this? that I should feel thus or thus towards Him? that I should live this life, or that life? that I should desire and seek and do whether this or that?

And so, if the Word of God, or one rightly instructed in it, be at hand at this moment to guide, there will oftentimes arise out of pain (under grace) a fourth consequence: a humble listening to the voice which speaks from heaven; a reverent attention to the call to penitence; a serious pondering of the past steps in evil; a bitter sorrow for that which has displeased God; a thankful acceptance of the offer of mercy which is in Christ Jesus; and a resolute setting out, afresh or for the first time, in the way of Gospel holiness and of the Divine life.

These things have we seen: the history of

the ministry is full of them: and as often as they are seen, they illustrate again the saying of St Paul, *Many are weak and sickly among you*...on purpose *that they should not be condemned with the world.*

These things may arise in the common course of God's Providence, when suffering overtakes the careless, and the alacrity of perfect health and spirits is exchanged, more or less gradually, for the couch of pining sickness.

Or they may arise more exactly in the manner here indicated by St Paul; when God is pleased to send some definite sickness as the scourge of some definite sin, and to let pain follow upon transgression as its appropriate penalty and retribution.

And no doubt, if our eyes were opened, like the eyes of the Prophet's servant in Dothan, to see the mountain of life full of those chariots and horses of fire which are the signals of God's active presence, we should perceive, oftener

than now, some connection of cause and effect, certainly of provocation and retribution, in the distresses and diseases of our mortal being: we should know that, in deed and in truth, God is still living and moving in human life as the Judge and the Avenger; stopping one here, and one there, in the career of hidden ungodliness, and making Nature herself His executioner in the appointment to each of some righteous recompense of punishment. We should perceive that, in our own case at least, God has not left us, even for a lifetime, to ourselves; but has interposed the arm of His chastisement—secretly to all but one person—because He saw us walking in some way that was not good, and because nevertheless *He loved us, and would do us good at our latter end.*

(2) But there stands behind, a word yet more remarkable, which tells us that, for the same cause, and with the same purpose of

mercy, *many* even *sleep*. In short, not pain only, but death itself, may be a minister of God for good.

I know nothing, in the whole compass of Scripture, at once more marvellous and more reconciling than this.

We read, I think, the Old Testament records of judgment, with a sort of tacit preconception that, when God slew, He also condemned. Many have been the half-suppressed feelings of inward dissatisfaction, with which men have studied the fate, for example, of the Disobedient Prophet. Nature said within them, that the sin of the deceived man, who believed his brother-prophet's lying utterance, when he ought to have clung tenaciously to God's earlier and unrevoked charge to himself, was less, after all, than the sin of the deceiver, who destroyed him by his lie, and then went to cry over him, *Alas, my brother!* And yet the one is ruthlessly seized by the executioner of vengeance,

and the other lives out all his days, and goes, respected and honoured, to the sepulchre of his fathers. Cast back, Christian friends, upon all such records the light of the revelation before us. If this man was what we make him—faithful in the main tenor, deceived in the special instance—be sure that the Judge of all the earth certainly did right, and remember St Paul's saying, *Many are weak and sickly among you—yea, many even sleep—chastened of the Lord, that they should not be condemned.*

And many have been the illustrations of the same saying, afforded to us both in the history of nations and in the records of personal experience. When we are tempted to ask, *Why should the sins of a whole dynasty of wicked French Kings be visited with unexampled severity on the last and best?* might we not let in the light of eternity upon the dark and piteous scene, and answer, *Peradventure because God was pleased thus to correct a frivolity and*

a self-indulgence which imperilled the soul, and gave the mind to distress, and the body to the executioner's axe, for the very reason assigned by St Paul, that the spirit might be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus?

Who can doubt that the same discipline, severe but gracious, has been exercised on a less august stage in a thousand times ten thousand instances? How often has the confession been heard on a penitent's deathbed, *I desire not prolonged life: I feel myself weak to resist temptation: I had rather, if it please God, be taken away now from evil to come!* And how often has that prayer been answered! How often has the trembling cry for mercy, the evident sign and token of repentance, the earnest trust in Jesus, and the longing desire for the heavenly presence, been all that was vouchsafed in evidence of the reality of a conversion! It has pleased God, in tender compassion, that the sincere resolution should never be put to the proof; that the

dying sorrow for sin, and the dying trust in the Saviour, should be left as the only testimony to the sinner's earnestness of repentance! And shall we coldly look on, in such a case, and say, *I have no faith in deathbed conversions: I have no proof that, if that dying man had lived, he might not have returned to his sin and died therein?* No—but have you no faith, yourself, in the wisdom and lovingkindness of your God? no confidence that He, who doeth all things well, judged better herein than you, and perhaps was thus fulfilling the very word written here in my text, *For this cause many sleep... that they should not be condemned with the world?*

My friends, God is better to us than we, and His mercy ampler than our puny measurements can compass. I believe, if it were only on the strength of this record, that there is a remedial agency in sickness, a remedial efficacy (under God) oftentimes in death, which largely

augments the number of the heirs of salvation, and replenishes the *great multitude which no man can number* with recruits of whom earth knows not, and whose names only the opening of the book of life shall reveal. To these, how many soever they be, shall belong the mysterious joy of those words of the Apostle Peter, *That they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit.*

4. The lessons of the text are yet far from exhausted: and one at least must be added, upon the instrumentality here ascribed to the body, in furthering the purposes of God's mercy concerning the soul.

The experience of most of those who hear me bears hard, I doubt not, on the body. They have found it the constant drag upon duty, and the perpetual inlet of temptation. No sin can be committed save through the body: more than this, almost every sin is not only acted but conceived through some suggestion

of the organs of sense. Therefore it is no wonder if their estimate of the body is both low and unfriendly. The Christian man owes the body a grudge for what he is. Some Christian men have deliberately set themselves to weaken it by austerities. They have thought their spiritual well-being to be exactly proportional to the humiliation and attenuation of the body. We cannot wonder, we can scarcely blame: and yet we think that Holy Scripture teaches us a better discipline and a more excellent way.

(1) For first of all it reminds us of the glorious prospect opened before us, in which the body, revived and reconstructed, shall be an essential part of the redeemed and rescued man. Instead of bidding us look forward to the *unclothing*, it bids us direct all our anticipations to the wondrous reinvestiture and *clothing upon*. *The hope of Israel* is, not death, but resurrection. The soul disembodied may

repose and recruit itself from the toils and wounds of its earthly travail and conflict; may bathe itself in the water of life, and bask awhile, for refreshment and revival, in the sunshine of a Saviour's smile. But the soul disembodied—if we rightly read the inspired sayings—cannot yet recommence its work for God: capable of contemplation, capable of praise, capable of adoration, it is incapable still of ministration: not till the spiritual body, incorruptible and glorious, is added to the soul in Resurrection, can that work begin—be it what it may—in which eternity is to be spent; that work in which man, complete in both his parts, shall emulate the angelic activity; like the Angels, *excelling in strength; doing* (not as now) *God's commandment, hearkening* (as never before) *to the voice of God's words.*

Now therefore this body, which has in it the seed and germ of such an immortality, must be looked upon with reverence and

treated with honour. *Know ye not,* St Paul asks, *that your body is* already, is now, *the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you?... Wherefore glorify God in your body.* Let every man *know how to possess his vessel* now *in sanctification and honour.* The future resurrection casts its shadow before, asserts for the body of humiliation some share of that respect which belongs of right to the body of glory.

This is one half of the revelation of God concerning man's body.

(2) The other half of that revelation is here. This body, this inlet and medium, too often, of temptation, is also in God's hand the instrument of a fatherly discipline. That discipline, as far as it is penal, is God's, not yours. You are to keep your body in temperance, sometimes even by the help of special acts of a necessary and religious self-denial, that it may do the soul's work, and prove itself the Spirit's temple. This you must do: but you

are not to undertake God's office, or presume to *punish* yourself through the body. Leave that work, so far as it shall be needful, to God alone. He, if and as He sees it to be needful for you, will chasten and discipline you through the machinery of the body. If pain comes, see God's hand in it. Connect it, if there be cause to do so, with some definite sin: even then accept it with a thankful sorrow. If there be no such cause revealed to you by a diligent self-scrutiny, then connect pain with general sinfulness; with the inheritance of a fallen nature, too surely acting itself, day by day, in thoughts and words and deeds of at least an unwilling infirmity. Accept it in this form with humility and thankfulness: feel that you deserve it, feel that you need it, see its gracious object, pray that it may bring you to the desired end. And even so, when death is in sight, think then of the words, *Many* even *sleep—judged* and *chastened, that*

they be not condemned: into God's hand commend your expiring soul, and, if He hide Himself with the cloud, call Him, even as Christ did, your Father still.

5. My friends—and more especially I would speak now to my younger brethren—it may be that the subject which has engaged our latest thoughts has appeared to some of you wanting in appropriateness and application. You are here, not in pain, not in sickness, with no sign or token of approaching death: why speak to you of these solemn matters, which seem at present to be so far removed from your thoughts and vision? I will tell you why I speak of them. Not though, but because, they are so far removed from your thoughts and vision. I would have them press upon you in all their strangeness; in the fulness of their contrast and contrariety to the life which is yours now. I can conceive few things more salutary to a young man—conscious of that vitality of every power and

every faculty, which makes existence itself an ecstasy—than that he should bring before himself, from time to time, by a determined effort, those stern realities of our human being of which we have now spoken: God's discipline of pain and sickness, God's discipline of a suffering death. Let him enter, on one of these days of health and cheerfulness—while life smiles upon him, and Nature herself seems to sympathize with his gladness—the walls of that Hospital to which we are to give to-day; and which stands, as it were, by the highway of our everyday life, to remind us of a condition most opposite to our own, and to which nevertheless the very accident of an accident might at any moment reduce us. Let him stand there, for a few moments, the thoughtful observer of the scene which presents itself. His pity will be stirred in him by the sight of every form and kind of suffering: little children, clinging to a mother's bosom, as if enquiring of

her what ails them and why: strong men, brought down in a moment from a life of productive industry to the helplessness of accident or the wandering of fever: young wives, waiting their turn for admission into the chamber of sickness, or listening with agonized eagerness for that physician's judgment which they must receive as the loved one's doom. It is good for him, assuredly, to be there. He will return from that visit a wiser if perhaps a sadder man. He will raise his heart to God in thankfulness for an undeserved exemption thus far from the stroke of pain. He will ask himself how the touch of sickness—sharp and sudden, or else gradual wasting sickness—would find or affect *him*. Is his heart so disciplined already beneath the will of God, by a daily continuance in prayer and well-doing, that he would hear with submission, hear without terror, the summons to a bed of sickness or an early grave? And thus he will have obeyed

in part, the profitable hint of the Apostle, *If we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged.*

Christian friends, it is impossible for one advanced far beyond you in life's long journey, to contemplate without emotion his younger and less experienced comrades. He must know —if his life has not been screened from anxiety beyond the common lot of all men—how slippery is the surest standing, how fallacious may be the brightest promise, in one who is now preparing to set out for himself in that career the end of which must be life eternal or eternal death. He must think of the solemn words, *The last shall be first, and the first last: for many are called, but few are chosen.* And he knows, if he be a Christian man, one and but one safeguard; open to all, infallible for all, yet alas! certain to be refused by many; that which lies, half shown, half hidden, in the words of the text, *If we would judge ourselves,*

we should not be judged. Yes, a heart opened daily with diligent thoughtfulness before the throne of grace—a life daily watched and tended by the sought and promised influence of the Holy Spirit of God—this, this is a security, the one security, alike against God's judgment here and God's condemnation hereafter: for this life is lived under God's protection, this heart is *fulfilled with the heavenly benediction.*

Day by day, let us carry our thoughts onward into the remote future, and forecast the one question and the one answer which will alone interest then. When all of life is gathered up for us within the curtains of a death-bed, the one only question of moment will be, *In whom have I believed?* and the one only answer of peace will be, *Thanks be to God, who giveth me the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.* Gifts of mind and body; stores of knowledge and wisdom; powers once exer-

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